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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Office of Current Intelligence
22 July 1963

CURRENT INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Executions in Syria

1. Since the abortive coup of 18 July, Damascus Radio has announced the execution of 27 persons for participation in it. Of these, 14 were civilians and 13 military--including 2 officers. The highest ranking was Col. Hisham Shabib, Chief of Staff of the Signal Corps, a 1958 engineering graduate of the University of California. The other was a captain. It is probable that all were pro-Nasirists. The Syrian Government has issued orders for the arrest of 58 more persons and more executions are likely.

2. In carrying out the executions, Syrian Baathist leaders are following in the footsteps of their fellow Baathists in Iraq, who soon after the 8 February coup carried out large-scale executions of Communist and other persons who resisted the coup. The government apparently hopes that the quick executions will discourage more plotting. Such drastic action also indicates that the Baath is willing to carry out a bare-knuckle campaign against Nasir.

3. The policy of executions is a clear break with the past. At no time since Syria became independent in 1945 have unsuccessful conspirators been executed. Although some people have been sentenced to death, the sentences have always been commuted. Syria has experienced eight coups since 1949.

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